

HEARTLAND

Older Women's League



Newsletter – May 2004

May 15, 2004 Meeting

TIME: 10:30 A.M.

PLACE: Village Presbyterian Church
6641 Mission Road
Prairie Village, KS



PROGRAM: - OWL member June Belt will bring to our meeting the Palliative Care Team based at Truman Medical Center in KC, MO to give us a presentation on palliative care.

PROGRAM CALENDAR

May 15 - June Belt (MSN, APRN), Jim Stoddard (D.O.), Cindy Wiklund (LMSW) and others will tell us what palliative care is and how the palliative care group works as a team with patients and families..

On **June 15**, we'll have our annual Auction and Potluck at **Sharon Lockhart's** home at 8336 Sagamore in Leawood. Her phone number is 913-642-1614. The auction is filled with good food, good fun and creative white 'OWLephants', so bring your pocket books and help us increase the OWL treasury.

On **July 17**, the **Rev. Bob Meneilly**, the retired minister of Village Presbyterian Church, will speak about the MainStream organization and its ongoing activities in the Kansas City area. The Mainstream Coalition is made up of well-informed, progressive Republicans, Democrats and Independents. The Coalition promotes civility in politics.

On **October 16** - Our February speaker, **Barbara Bonnekennen**, will return with another exciting program for us. We'll have a follow-up to our lively discussion with her about "Women's Human Rights".

REFRESHMENTS

May 15 Sara Pedram
June 19 Picnic at Sharon Lockhart's
July 17 Peggy Fish

GUESTS

We had a number of guests at our March meeting. Lucy Foy, Mary Long, Anne O'Shea, Annette Bierschenk, Ellen Huls, Marge Pilot, Joan Wagner, Mamie Hughes, Geri Hawley, Ernestine Walker Gordon and Janet Blauvelt.

We also saw some members who we haven't seen for quite a while. We hope to see both visitors and members again in the near future at an OWL meeting.

OWL EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

There will be an Executive Board Meeting at the home of Sara Pedram on Thursday, June 3rd. at 6:30 pm. Her address is 4428 Harrison.

All members are invited -- we really need help with program ideas for August, Sept. November and December.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY NEEDED! SENIOR ADVOCACY ALERT:

Both Legislative bodies have completed drafting their 2005 budget and there is still advocacy needed to help our Kansas seniors.

Senior Care Act The 2005 budgets being proposed by both the House and Senate for the Kansas Department on Aging removes **\$400,000** from the **Senior Care Act** budget next year. The Senior Care Act was funded at \$6.9 million in current year, but reduced to \$6.5 million in 2005.

The Senior Care Act provides vital in-home services to 6,304 seniors across Kansas. As many as 340 seniors who currently receive help to stay in their homes could lose their services if these cuts are passed. Along with the current waiting list of 280, this action could leave 620 seniors across Kansas waiting for Senior Care Act services.

If just 33 (or 5%) of those 620 seniors go to a nursing home, the state will spend more money than it hopes to save!

HCBS-FE Services After reviewing the budgets, the Home and Community-Based Service program for the Frail Elderly (HCBS-FE) was addressed in the both budgets. Ask your legislators to support the HCBS-FE budget.

WRITE, CALL OR EMAIL YOUR LEGISLATOR TODAY!

1. Provide the funding necessary to allow Kansas seniors the choice to remain living in their home.

2. Support adding \$900,000 to the Senior Care Act. This would keep seniors from being removed from Senior Care Act services and provide services to the 280 seniors currently on the waiting list.

3. Support the current level of funding for the Home and Community-Based Services for the Frail Elderly (HCBS-FE).

Craig Kaberline,
Executive Director, (785)-235-8734
Kansas Area Agencies on Aging Assoc
1720 SW Topeka Blvd, Topeka, KS 66612

**May is
Older Americans Month,
with the theme of
"Aging Well, Living Well"**

The next articles are from the OWL website.

NATIONAL OWL WEBSITE
<http://www.owl-national.org/index.htm>

Older Americans' Mental Health Week May 23rd-May 29th, 2004

OWL is pleased to announce the second annual Older Americans' Mental Health Week May 23rd -29th, 2004. We ask partners once again to help celebrate this public health campaign by holding a public education event in your local communities.

The mental health needs of older Americans have been largely ignored. People of all ages mistakenly assume that mental health problems are a normal part of aging and cannot be treated. This misguided thinking has serious implications, especially for midlife and older women. **Women are more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression** and, on average, live six years longer than men, further expanding the opportunity for undiagnosed illness. Also, as caregivers, midlife and older women are often left to deal with undiagnosed and untreated mental health disorders in family and others.

Older Americans' Mental Health Week participants can increase their community's understanding of mental illness and can reduce the stigma that keeps many older Americans from seeking needed treatment. Public education activities can be coupled with efforts to identify and ameliorate barriers to diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders.

With the proper identification and treatment of mental illness, all older Americans will be in a position to live out their lives with more health and satisfaction.

OLDER WOMEN IN AMERICA

Today in America, the average woman age 65 and over lives six years longer than the average man. As a result, she is typically widowed and living alone. She struggles to make ends meet on an annual income of \$15,615 (compared with over \$29,171 for men). During her lifetime she probably spent 17 years caring for children and 18 years caring for elderly parents. Her retirement income is also smaller because she probably did not receive a pension, and was paid less than the average man. As a result, she receives lower Social Security benefits. She spends a higher proportion of her income on housing costs — leaving less for vital necessities such as utilities, medical costs, food, and transportation. The average older woman spends 20 percent of her income each year on out-of-pocket health care costs.

Life patterns and public policies dynamically intersect to create this familiar picture of the average older woman in America. The State of Older Women in America details some of the issues that contribute to and perpetuate this pattern, and highlights recommendations for addressing these critical concerns — issues that are of increasing importance in our aging society.

OWL NATIONAL CONVENTION

Thanks to the monumental efforts of Joan Bennett, our chapter's proposal to host the 25th Anniversary OWL National Convention (scheduled for October, 2005) in Kansas City was submitted to the national office by the April 30th deadline. Joan contacted the Kansas City Convention and Visitors Bureau, who put together an impressive packet of material about area hotels, transportation options (plane and train) and fares from all over the country. There was also material on local attractions as well as on many other amenities to interest the convention attendees.

The conference site will be decided at the national OWL board meeting in June, so we will hope to be notified in July. Keep your fingers crossed ... and stay at the ready to volunteer.

**Statement of Dr. Laurie Young,
Executive Director**

The Older Women's League

On Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan's comments on Social Security

We are deeply disturbed that Chairman Alan Greenspan would suggest cutting Social Security benefits as a method of dealing with soaring deficits. The idea that deficits caused by huge unaffordable tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, should be resolved by cutting Social Security benefits strikes at the very foundation of economic security in retirement for older women.

Women comprise the majority of Social Security beneficiaries representing, 58% of all Social Security recipients at 65 and 71% of all recipients by age 85. Older women should not bear the burden of fiscally irresponsible tax cuts. Over 90% of women over 65 receive social security with a median benefit of \$7,750.00. Without Social Security, more than 50% of women over the age of 65 would be living in poverty. Is he really suggesting a cut in this benefit?

It is incredible that Chairman Greenspan would call for cuts in benefits and simultaneously suggest making the tax cuts permanent. OWL calls for a responsible plan to control deficits with a comprehensive program to rollback these tax cuts and stop irresponsible and historical over-reactions around the issue of Social Security solvency.



Don't Balance Medicare Reform on the Backs of Older Women

While the Medicare Reform proposal currently in conference is bad for all older Americans, it is disproportionately harmful to older women. Midlife and older women have yet to reach economic equality with their male counterparts and they tend to live longer and have more chronic health conditions than men, leaving them more dependent on Medicare in their later years.

- Women are 57% of the Medicare population.
- By the time women reach age 85 they represent 70% of Medicare beneficiaries.
- Women are more than twice as likely as men to face poverty in retirement.
- Women account for more than 70% of the elderly poor.
- Three-fourths of nursing home residents are women and at least half of them are on Medicaid and Medicare.

How will this Medicare Reform proposal hurt women?

• Women account for the majority of people who are on both Medicare and Medicaid. **This proposal is harmful to the poorest and sickest women because their out of pocket costs would increase above what Medicaid currently allows and copayments would dramatically increase further in future years. This proposal would also prohibit Medicaid from continuing to provide the poorest and sickest women with drugs that certain Medicare drug plans may not cover.**

• Older and sicker beneficiaries, often women, have not joined HMO's and tend to rely on the traditional Medicare program. **This proposal is harmful to older and sicker women because its "premium support" provisions would undermine the traditional Medicare program and cause costs in that program to rise.**

• Nearly eight in ten women on Medicare use prescription drugs regularly. **This proposal is harmful to women because it**

would preclude the government from negotiating price controls on drugs, leading to higher drug costs for both seniors and the American treasury.

• Elderly women are two times more likely to experience depression than men. Drugs that work for this condition are very particular to the individual. **This proposal is harmful to the poorest and sickest women because it denies them the ability to have Medicaid cover every specific drug they may need for their illness. Women on Medicare would be hurt, for example, by the overall limit of access to only one type of drug for depression in each plan.**

• Currently, women in nursing homes who are on Medicaid as well as Medicare are allowed to keep only \$30 a month for incidentals, but Medicaid is prohibited from charging nursing home residents copayments. **This proposal, if not fixed, is harmful to the poorest and sickest women in nursing homes because it would require new copayments for their drugs, which will increase dramatically over time. Given their limited funds, these women may have to go without needed drugs if they cannot afford the copayments.**

This proposal is harmful for working women with serious health problems because the proposal includes Health Savings Accounts (HSA's) for people under age 65. These HSA's would cause employer-based coverage to be compromised because healthy people would leave employer group plans to join HSA's and thereby cause the sicker women in employer plans to experience rising premiums.



WOW! What an Awards Luncheon

32 members and guests attended the 10th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon on April 17, 2004 at the First Watch Restaurant in Shawnee, Kansas. The energy and celebratory spirit was contagious as we presented Founder's Day Awards to six very special women with deep roots to our OWL Chapter as well as one WOW (Wonderful Older Woman) award to Lucy Foy, Community Leader.

We will include the presenter's introduction of all of our awardees in this and the coming newsletters. We start here with **Lucy Foy**.



LUCY FOY

The Wonderful Older Woman, honored at our April luncheon, was nominated by Mary Long, whose eloquent words we are including here as an inspiration for all of us.

The nominee is a graduate of A & T College, Greensboro, North Carolina. She received her Masters Degrees from Ohio State And Prairieview College.

She is a World War II veteran of the U.S. Army, who proudly served her country in Rheims, France, 1944, and in other, stateside, posts.

She is listed in Who's Who in Corporate Education, a member of Women in the

Military, and Black Women in the Military. The nominee faced blatant racism during her tenure in the military but neither racism nor poverty blinded her vision nor kept her from obtaining professional degrees.

The nominee is a devoted member of St. Andrews United Methodist Church. She is a member of several auxiliaries and clubs and of the church mother.

She is a long-term mentor and friend to many teachers of the Kansas City Missouri School District. She is responsible for establishing the Beta Phi Beta, Sigma chapter, Sorority in Kansas City, MO and Wichita, KS. The nominee was successful in recruiting professional black women to join these chapters in the early '60s. This business women's sorority was founded in Detroit, MI, in 1942. The Kansas City chapter gives two scholarships each year to local deserving single black females who need assistance in continuing their education. It also conducts fundraisers with the proceeds used for scholarships and gives Thanksgiving baskets to needy family. It holds Vesper services annually at nursing homes and Black History programs are held during February at special needs schools (Delano and B.W. Shepherd schools).

The nominee is also an active member of Concerned Women for Justice. This organization tirelessly communicates with, and contacts resources for older women who have been victims of fraud, employment issues, and housing.

Her physical disability has not kept her from becoming an icon for seniors who are plagued with health issues. Although she does not possess a medical license she counsels and cautions black females about their health and stress factors at various meetings throughout the city.

At nearly 80 years of age the nominee is also a world traveler.

Thank you, **Mary Long**, for this awesome nomination, and thank you, **Lucy Foy**, for being an award-winning Wonderful Older Woman!

